

OBEAGU, Chike Chinazom

Cold Fighting

Dualism
of Human Nature
in Painting



To My
Blaise
With
Prof. Chabden
in
great regards
for all
your
support. Sir,
Thank you,
I greatly
appreciate
you

Colin Epotu isirig

Dualism of Human Nature in Painting

PhD Exhibition Catalogue

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Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria

THE SAGACIOUS DUALITY OF CHIKE OBEAGU'S PAINTINGS

By Blaise Gundu Gbaden, PhD

Chike Obeagu's normative painting style can best be described as Mixed Media Collage. His technique of painting incorporates photo-realistic imageries which he contuses onto canvas compositions that defy the imagination of common place human beings. And he works on the big scale, with his biggest art works measuring up to 8 ft x 12 ft and the smallest ones measuring a mere 3 ft x 4 ft, that is if you are lucky to meet him in a sedate state.

What the recently earned PhD degree in Painting has done is to transfigure his whole being into some philosophically sagacious painter who is so resplendent in demeanour that he now contemplates matters of the ethereal realm, where out-of-body experiences have overwhelmed his rational humanistic tendencies. He is now attuned to ephemeral essences having shed off the cocoons of social commentary to embrace much higher goals of human enterprise.

Much of Chike's artistic influence is derivable from an innate spiritual essence; he is also drawn to art that has spirituality at the core of its very creation. His interest in the paintings of Patricia Ariel, a contemporary Brazilian-American artist based in the Pacific Northwest, attests to this reality. He has made reference to her painting aptly titled "Duality" in his PhD dissertation, thus keeping her art central to his methodological impetus. So too is his intense interest in "Cryptic Duality", a mural by Dante Horoiwa, the self-taught artist from Sao Paulo, Brazil.

In essence several of such figures prestage his own academic delivery, which comes to us embellished with Igbo cosmological belief in the existence of binary personalities in both the elemental and spiritual realms of human reality. Other influences are acknowledged by Chike. They include, Erhabor Emokpae, Frida Khalo, Salvador Dali, Olamide Onadipe, Peju Alatise, and Ayoola Gbolahan, just to mention a few.

Yes, it is true that the dual principles of participatory dialogue still places emphasis on human relations, as exemplified in the painting "Madiba's Option" (Mixed Media Diptych Painting Installation, Variable, 2019), this time it is not for vain political glory but for the benefit of a humankind on the very fringes of grace; or so it may seem.

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By Blaise Gaudin, PhD

"Mind and Body" (Mixed Media, 122x122cm, 2018) in the words of the versatile artist himself "embodies the visual interplay between life and death". The largely reddish canvas has a gaping hole edged with cryptic white acrylic on the upper left hand corner symbolizing the ephemeral nature of human life. He uses the dominant red to represent life which when it dies would move into the spirit realm of white and finally collapse into oblivion as represented by the gaping hollow. One might be tempted to say that even as simplistic as this composition is, it captures the concept of duality very effectively. The ephemeral nature of human life may be captured by this metaphor of a hollow but it still may not dissuade people from displaying such vain attitudes as pomposity and overblown self-indulgent postures. We fail to realize that at some stage in life we shall transit to the great beyond and our body shall then be eaten up by natural processes of decomposition in the belly of the earth. Hopefully the soul may ascend to reunite with its creator or move on to damnation. This reality should humble us, but most often it does not.

"Dialogue over Minimum Wage" (Mixed Media Diptych Painting Installation, Variable, 2018) obtains its inspiration from the Chinese Yin and Yang concept (female ad masculine elements) symbolized by the graphic imagery of black and white amoebic complementary forms contained in a ball like structure. Two chairs are placed opposite each other and the table chair is sparsely wrapped with newspaper cut-outs while the armchair has elaborately decorated fabrics wrapped around it. The irony is that while the bare table chair rests on lush fabrics the arm chair is placed on sparse newspaper ground. In life there is a place for give and take. One person does not have it all. There are empty spaces in our personality that have to be filled up by the complementary attribution of another person. This way a balance is created giving us a life worth living.

A worthy life is probably the desire the erstwhile painter, Obeagu, wants us to have when he created this series based on human foibles and struggles and gains but essentially inspired by a real-life out-of-body experience (OBE). How he has managed to intellectualize the experience and transform it into a successful doctoral thesis is probably the handwork of talent beyond comparable skill.

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Chike Obeagu

Blaise Gaudin
Department
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By Blaise Gunda Gbadeu, PhD

At a certain stage in our academic careers when it became obvious that we would have to enroll for a doctoral programme if we wanted to remain relevant in the various citadels of learning we belonged to, we (and that means my classmates and I) often discussed what level of collateral damage would be inflicted upon versatile artists who left the confines of the studio to embrace the intellectually lasking uncertainty of a PhD Painting degree. We were sure it would be negatively impactful and leave the person an intellectual pervert, writing bogus verbirosities and publishing them in journals, but remain very much unable to produce paintings of any worth forthwith.

But we were probably wrong. Look at Chike Chinazom Obeagu. He has continued to function as an ardent painter who produces more conceptually attuned paintings than ever before. Of course the damage is visible! Where his art was essentially aesthetically pleasing, large, and compositionally astute, now he produces conceptually agonizing paintings which examine the human conscience and inflict judgment on erring souls even before they have a chance to catch a breath. Yes this PhD is going to cause more damage to those who are willing to embrace it with the open mindedness that it demands.

Chike Obeagu has done so. And the gains are clear to see.

Blaise Gunda Gbadeu, PhD
Department of Visual and Creative Arts
Federal University of Lafia
Nasarawa State, Nigeria